

Tucson Citizen

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16 employers win awards for carpool, transit work

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Being known for vacant employee parking spaces was an honor for 16 Tucson companies and government entities yesterday.

The businesses were recognized for their work in bringing commuting improvements into workplaces.

As Mariachi Serenata played, Mayor Bob Walkup, Greater Tucson Economic Council President Steve on the University of Arizona campus.

For consideration, an employer must offer at least one of the following as a primary employee benefit: offsets at least 6 percent of daily trips.

The Southern Arizona VA Health Care System qualified, along with 10 other recipients, for offering a 100 percent bus subsidy to employees who use transit.

"It is a joint effort. It is a team effort. Our mission remains the same: To provide the best for our employees and provide the best for Tucson," said J.L. Pepé Mendoza, a VA spokesman.

An employer can deduct subsidized bus passes from company income taxes, said George Caria, Sun the bus system.

Sun Tran ridership was up 6 percent last year, although nationally bus ridership declined 2 percent to 3 percent, Caria said.

The UA qualified by offering a carpool incentive, with more than 1,200 employees carpooling.

Pima Association of Governments spearheaded the Best Workplaces Coalition as a way to aid employers with employee morale, retention, and recruiting efforts, said Gayle Johnson, PAG employer representative.

"We try to convey to employers the benefits derived from offering a subsidy," she said. "Most employees want to work for an employer that offers some kind of benefit."

In fall 2001, Ventana Medical Systems consolidated 20 facilities into one Northwest Side campus. The firm turned to PAG to help devise a plan to retain workers after the move.

"We did it for selfish reasons," said Mark Nechita, vice president for human resources and

- Abrams Airborne Manufacturing Inc.
- Tucson government
- Devon Gables Health Care Center
- IBM
- National Bank of Arizona
- Pima Association of Governments
- Pima County
- Raytheon Missile Systems
- Southern Arizona VA Health Care System
- Sun Tran
- The University of Arizona
- Marana
- Tucson Airport Authority
- Tucson Electric Power Co.
- Ventana Medical Systems Inc.
- Viscount Suite Hotel

Environmental Protection Agency:

www.commuterchoice.gov

www.bwc.gov

Sun Tran:

www.suntran.com

Pima Association of Governments:

www.pagnet.org or e-mail bestworkplaces@pagnet.org